

Tommy Banks to play rare public performance for Lethbridge Jazz Festival

Written by Richard Amery

Tuesday, 14 June 2011 10:31 - Last Updated Thursday, 24 May 2018 06:55

Canadian jazz legend and Senator Tommy Banks will be making a rare public performance in Lethbridge, June 18 for the Lethbridge Jazz Festival, at the Sterndale Bennett Theatre.

"I'll be playing a wide variety of good music," Banks promised over the phone from Ottawa. He said it has been at least 10 years since he has played Lethbridge.



Banks, who has a storied career which has included many highlights including playing for the Pope and the Queen as well as composing music for Expo 86, as well as at the Calgary Olympics in '88, is looking forward to playing the Lethbridge Jazz Festival. Being busy in the Senate, he doesn't play live as often as he'd like, so his solo piano show at the Sterndale Bennett Theatre, June 18, will be a special treat for everybody.

"I love that someone started a jazz festival. Summer festivals are wonderful as long as they don't take away from what is happening the rest of the year," he said.

"It will be good music encompassing jazz classics and standard jazz repertoire," said Banks, who started playing professionally back in 1950. He has received a Juno Award, a Gemini Award, Several ARIA Awards, the Grande Prix du Disques-Canada and is a member of the Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame.

He is looking forward to playing the Festival.

"Well, I was asked," he said.

"I'm not touring around much because Parliament is in session, I'm not playing very much music now," he said, joking he hopes people won't be able to tell.

"When I retire from the Senate in about a year, I'll start playing more. It's what I've done for the past 50 years, so I'm looking forward to getting back at it," he said adding he got into jazz music after his parents took him to a Lionel Hampton concert.

Tommy Banks to play rare public performance for Lethbridge Jazz Festival

Written by Richard Amery

Tuesday, 14 June 2011 10:31 - Last Updated Thursday, 24 May 2018 06:55

“My parents took me to a concert by Lionel Hampton,” he said.

“I’d heard jazz music on the radio, but I’d never heard anything that different,” he said.

He couldn’t choose just one highlight from his career, though performing for the Pope was definitely up there.

“It was deafening. People were cheering so loud, not many people could hear it because they were cheering so loud. It was such a celebration of life,” he said.

{youtube}kHVB-oU8tEg&NR{/youtube}

He said composing music for people like the Pope and the Queen is just a matter of using his imagination.

“I just put myself in the mindset of writing ceremonial music, which isn’t difficult,” he continued noting the challenge is turning what he envisions into reality.

“I think young people have difficulty with it. It’s different today, because with technology, it is so easy to immediately see whatever you imagine anything you can imagine, you can immediately see,” he continued.

“Before, when you would listen to a radio drama, you would have to imagine what the set looked like and imagine what the actors look like. Now, when you imagine something, you can immediately see what it looks like,” he said.

Tickets to the show are \$22 for Jazz Society Members, \$27 for non-members. The show begins at the Sterndale Bennett Theatre at 8 p.m.

— *By Richard Amery, L.A. Beat Editor*{jcomments on}